

U.S. Election Procedures

(Article from Bureau of International Information Programs at U.S. Department of State)



Thousands of administrators are responsible for organizing and conducting U.S. elections, including tabulating and certifying the results. These officials have an important and complex set of tasks — setting the exact dates for elections, certifying the eligibility of candidates, registering eligible voters and preparing voter rolls, selecting voting equipment, designing ballots, organizing a large temporary work force to administer the voting on Election

Day, tabulating the votes and certifying the results.

While most American elections are not particularly close, there are occasionally races with a very small margin of victory or races in which the outcome is contested. The outcome of the 2000 U.S. presidential election — the drawn-out contest to determine a winner in the closest presidential election in American history — exposed Americans to many of these administrative issues for the first time.

Voting in the United States is a two-step process. There is no national list of eligible voters, so a citizen must first qualify by becoming registered. Citizens register to vote where they live; if they move to a new location, they have to register again at their new address. Registration systems were designed to eliminate fraud, but the procedures for registering voters vary from state to state. In times past, selective registration procedures were used to discourage certain citizens — most notably, African Americans in the South — from participating in elections.

There had been a tendency to ease registration requirements. For instance, the 1993 National Voter Registration Act makes it possible for citizens to register to vote at the

time they renew their state-issued driver's licenses. More recently, however, many states are passing laws making registration more difficult by, for example, requiring government-issued identification, restricting voter registration drives and eliminating registration on Election Day.

One of the most important functions for election officials is ensuring that everyone who is eligible to vote is on the registration lists but that no one who is unqualified is included. Generally, local election officials err on the side of keeping people on the lists even if they have not voted recently, rather than eliminating potentially eligible voters. When people appear at the polls whose names are not on the lists, they are now given a provisional ballot to record their votes. Their eligibility is subsequently reviewed before their votes are counted.

Administering Elections

In the United States, an election, even an election for federal office, is a locally conducted administrative exercise. And, as noted, election administrators — typically county or city officials or clerks — have a daunting task. Not only are they responsible for registering voters all year long and for determining who is eligible to vote in a particular election, they also have to design the ballots for each election and make sure that all certified candidates are listed and all issues up for decision correctly worded. And they must try to make the ballot as simple and as clear as possible.

Currently, there are no national standards for ballot forms. Under the Voting Rights Act, election officials may have to provide ballots in multiple languages (if a percentage of the population does not speak English as a primary language). In some jurisdictions, the order of the candidates and parties on the ballot has to be randomly assigned. Ultimately, local election officials have to select the specific voting machines to use, and the ballots must fit the devices.

...continued on page 2

The American Center

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H O L I D A Y S

October 2 - Mahatma Gandhi Jayanti
October 8 - Columbus Day
October 26 - Bakri Id (Id-UI-Zua)

In between elections, these officials are responsible for the storage and maintenance of the voting devices. And one of their most difficult tasks is to hire and train a large temporary staff for one long session of work (typically 10 to 15 hours) on Election Day.

The Nature of Balloting

A certain effort goes into fair, legal and professional preparation for elections. Since the equipment and ballot forms are generally purchased by officials at the local level, the type and condition of equipment that voters use often is related to the socioeconomic status and the tax base of their locale. Since local tax revenue also funds schools, police and fire services, as well as parks and recreation facilities, investments in voting technology often have been given low priority.

A wide variety of voting devices is available in the United States, and the landscape of voting technologies is continuously changing. Today, there are very few places where voting takes place with handheld paper ballots marked with an "X" next to a candidate's name, as was done in the past, but many computerized systems still depend on paper ballots on which circles are filled in or lines connected. These ballots are then scanned mechanically to have the votes recorded; the equipment is known as an optical scan system.

Some jurisdictions still use "lever" machines, on which voters turn a small lever next to the names of the candidates they prefer or the side of an issue they support. Another very common device is a "punch-card" machine. The ballot is a card where holes or punches are made next to a candidate's name, or the card is inserted into a holder that lines up with a ballot image, and then the holes are punched. This is the form of ballot that caused controversy in counting votes for the 2000 U.S. presidential election in Florida. As a result of that situation, many jurisdictions have eliminated punch-card devices. The Help America Vote Act provided voluntary funding to jurisdictions to replace lever and punch-card voting systems.

The current trend is toward adoption of direct recording electronic (DRE) devices, which have touch screens that resemble those of automated banking machines. Security specialists are working to refine these systems to resolve security issues.

A significant change in balloting in recent years has been the adoption of procedures that make ballots available to voters before the election. This trend

started with provisions for absentee ballots, issued to voters who anticipate being away from their home (and their voting place) on Election Day. Some states and local jurisdictions gradually liberalized this provision, allowing citizens to register as "permanent absentee voters" and routinely have a ballot mailed to their home. Oregon conducts its elections entirely by mail, but it is the only state to do so at present. Absentee voters generally return their completed ballots by mail.

Another new provision is "early voting," for which voting machines are set up in shopping malls and other public places for up to three weeks before Election Day. Citizens stop by at their convenience to cast their votes.

Counting the Votes

Tabulation of votes takes place on Election Day. Even though early ballots are becoming more popular, they are not counted until tabulation begins after the polls close, so that no official information can be released about which candidate is ahead or behind. Information about early results of balloting could affect later stages of the election.

The Reform Movement

One of the distinct lessons of the 2000 presidential election was that the election administration, balloting and vote-counting issues encountered in Florida could have occurred to some degree in almost any jurisdiction in the United States. Several studies were commissioned, and a variety of panels heard expert witnesses and took testimony about the need for reform.

In 2002, Congress passed the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), which includes several notable elements. First, the federal government offered payments to states and localities to replace outdated punch-card and lever-voting machines. Second, it established an Election Assistance Commission to provide technical assistance to local election administration officials and establish standards for voting devices. The commission's portfolio includes establishment of research programs to study voting machine and ballot design, methods of registration, methods for provisional voting and for deterring fraud, procedures for recruiting and training poll workers and education programs for voters, among other matters.

HAVA represents a significant departure from limited federal involvement in what has historically been a local administrative issue. But this procedural reform effort has helped reconfirm the faith that Americans have in their electoral system. And the costs involved are small when one considers that elections are the legitimizing foundation of democracy.

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SOUND CHECK BEST BAND



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12 October
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FEATURING



Gracious Timothy

Who won the Sound Check
for best original song

WITH



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**Lucky
Draw**

Win Prizes:

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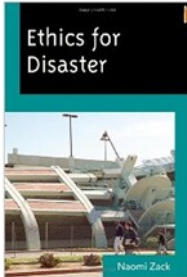
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NOTES FROM THE AMERICAN LIBRARY

Resources on Ethics, Economics, Foreign Policy and Management

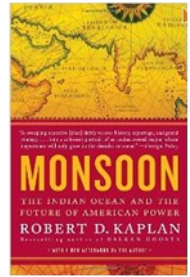


***Ethics for Disaster* by Naomi Zack.**
Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011.

This book addresses the moral aspects of hurricanes, earthquakes, tornadoes, plane crashes, Avian Flu pandemics, and other disasters and explores how these catastrophes illuminate the existing inequalities in society by employing the moral systems of utilitarianism, deontology, and virtue ethics.

***Monsoon: the Indian Ocean and the future of American power* by Robert D. Kaplan.** Random House, 2011

This book shows how crucial the “Monsoon Asia” countries which include India, Pakistan, China, Indonesia, Burma, Oman, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Tanzania have become for American power.



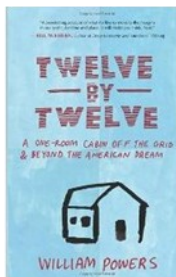
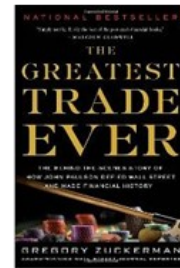
***This Time is Different: Eight Centuries of Financial Folly* by Carmen M. Reinhart and Kenneth S. Rogoff.**
Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2011

The title presents a comprehensive look at the varieties of financial crises, and guides us through eight astonishing centuries of government defaults, banking panics, and inflationary spikes—from medieval currency debasements to today's subprime catastrophe.



***Greatest Trade Ever: the Behind-the-Scenes Story of how John Paulson Defied Wall Street and made Financial History* by Gregory Zuckerman.** Crown Business, 2010

The Greatest Trade Ever is a behind-the-scenes narrative of how a contrarian foresaw an escalating financial crisis—that outwitted Chuck Prince, Stanley O'Neal, Richard Fuld, and Wall Street's titans—to make financial history.

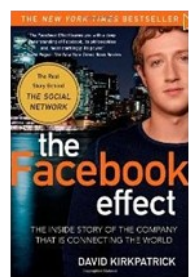


***Twelve By Twelve: A One-Room Cabin Off the Grid & Beyond the American Dream* by William Powers.**
New World Library, 2010

This engrossing tale of Powers's struggle for a meaningful life with a smaller footprint proposes a paradigm shift to an elusive “Soft World” with clues to personal happiness and global healing.

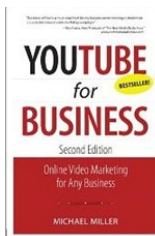
***Facebook Effect: The Inside Story of the Company that is Connecting the World* by David Kirkpatrick.** Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2011

The book chronicles the successes of Facebook and gives a complete assessment of founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg, the central figure in the company's remarkable ascent.

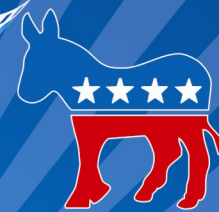
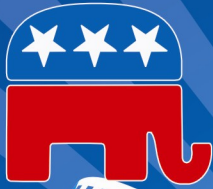


***Youtube For Business: Online Video Marketing for any Business* by Michael Miller.** Que, 2011. 2nd Edition.

The books helps professionals in planning their YouTube online marketing plan, improve brand awareness, and drive traffic to the company's website—without breaking your marketing budget.



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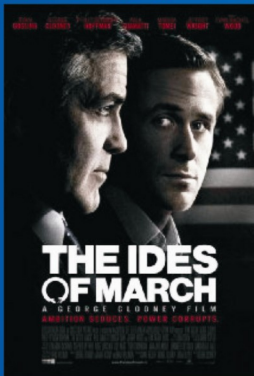


Theme of
the month

U.S. Govt./
Elections

Saturday FILM SCREENINGS at 2:30 P.M.

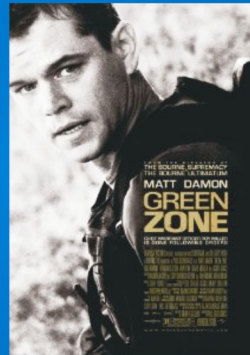
Oct. 6



The Ides of March (2011, 101 min)

An idealistic staffer for a new presidential candidate gets a crash course on dirty politics during his stint on the campaign trail.

Oct. 13



Green Zone (2010 115 min)

Discovering covert and faulty intelligence causes a U.S. Army officer to go rogue as he hunts for Weapons of Mass Destruction in an unstable region.

Oct. 20



Thirteen Days (2000, 145 min)

A dramatization of President Kennedy's administration's struggle to contain the Cuban Missile Crisis in October of 1962.

Oct. 27



The Contender (2006, 126 min)

A political thriller about Laine Hanson, a senator who is nominated to become Vice President following the death of the previous office holder. During the confirmation process, Laine is the victim of a vicious attack on her personal life. She is torn as to whether she should fight back, or stick to her high principles and refuse to comment on the allegations.

Venue:

U.S. Consulate General

C-49, G Block, Near Trident Hotel, Bandra-Kurla Complex, Bandra (E), Mumbai - 51

Mobile phones and laptops are permitted for this event, but Bluetooth technology must be disabled. Cameras, memory storage devices, and other electronic equipment are not allowed. Photography and video recording in and around the Consulate compound is strictly prohibited.

FREE
and open to public
on a first-come, first-served basis



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WORD FROM THE CENTER

The American political season is in full swing this October as we approach the U.S. presidential elections on November 6. Over the past several months, the American Center and the U.S. Consulate General have done many programs on the U.S. election process educating students and the general public about the idiosyncrasies of the American democratic process. This month, candidates Mitt Romney and Barack Obama will engage in three debates on domestic and foreign policy issues. **We'll be hosting a viewing party and discussion on the evening of October 23 for the debate on foreign policy, and I hope that you'll join us. Event details will be updated on our Facebook.**

And, of course, once November 6th is over stay tuned for more programs on the impact of the elections. In true American Center style, the programs will be thought provoking and informative.

We have lots of other interesting programs planned for October and the next few months. For example, next week on October 11, we have a discussion with Indian-American author Kunal Mukherjee about his recently published book "My Magical Palace," about a young boy's coming of age in Hyderabad. The book is available in the American Library and on the Queer Ink bookstore (<http://www.queer-ink.com>).

As always, our latest schedule of events can be found on our Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/mumbai.usconsulate>. Do visit the page frequently to find out what's happening and be sure to "like" us!



Angela Gemza
Cultural Affairs Officer



United States-India Educational Foundation (USIEF) in partnership with the Institute of International Education (IIE) is hosting an exciting fair in Mumbai at the J.W. Marriott Hotel on November 11th. Over 35 US Universities including University of California, Berkley, Arizona State University, Portland State University, University of Southern California, Viterbi School of Engineering to name a few, are participating in the fair.

The Fair is free and open to all students who are aspiring to go to the U.S. for their higher studies.

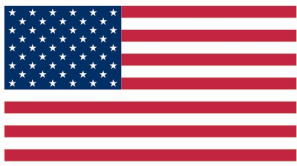
Prior to the Fair, USIEF has planned an interesting event comprising of presentation sessions that will provide an overview on higher education both at the undergraduate and graduate levels, working while on a student visa, and most importantly, a visa session by a visa officer from the U.S. Consulate in Mumbai. All sessions are free. Packed with surprise gifts and games, the event which begins at 12 noon promises to give aspiring students a holistic understanding of the application process. The Fair opens at 2 pm. Students can register early at <http://bit.ly/USIEF-IIE2012> for the event. Email usiefmumbai@usief.org.in for details.

**For more information or additional resources,
contact**

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If you are an alumnus of an United States exchange program and have received special recognition, please send a write-up with 2-3 photos to mumbaipublicaffairs@state.gov. You could be featured in future e-bulletins!



As the U.S. presidential race heats up, millions of Americans prepare to cast their ballots. But did you know that Americans do not directly elect the president? Rather, we utilize a complex system called the electoral college. Come hear about this, as well as curious historical facts, how there truly is no "national" election, and exactly what a "swing state" is.

About the speaker

Daniel Gedacht is a Foreign Service Officer in his fourth overseas tour with the Department of State. He arrived in Mumbai in January 2011, after a tour as Desk Officer in the Office of Provincial Affairs at Embassy Baghdad, where he supported Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Northern Iraq. He has also served at the U.S. Embassies in Manila, Philippines and Warsaw, Poland. Prior to joining the State Department, Dan worked as a translator/interpreter in Italy, Financial Advisor in Bethesda, MD, and Business Development Manager and TV Performer in Seoul, South Korea. He speaks Italian, Polish, Korean, and passable Hebrew; and earned Masters degrees in international affairs from American University and Korea University in Seoul. He is the author of several published non-fiction books for children, an avid runner and hiker, and played varsity baseball for Clark University. Dan and his wife are the proud parents of two daughters and twin sons.

15th October²⁰¹² at 06:30 PM

U.S. Consulate General,

C-49, G Block, Bandra-Kurla Complex
Near Trident Hotel, Bandra-East, Mumbai-400051

Free Entry

On a first-come, first-served basis.



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Saturday Kids' Movies

White Fang

(1991, 107 min)

MONSTER HOUSE

(2006, 91 min)

Fred Claus

(2007, 116 min)

Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer (Animation)

(1998, 83 min)



A courageous young man and a magnificent wolf in an epic struggle of survival

Three teens discover that their neighbor's house is really a living, breathing, scary monster.

Fred Claus, Santa's bitter older brother, is forced to move to the North Pole.

Rudolph is born with a red nose he is bullied throughout his younger years, a chain of events brings Rudolph from zero to hero.



Hey Kids! Come and enjoy movies

(Screening will start at 11:00 AM)



This event is for children 6-16 years old; those under 16 must be accompanied by a parent.

Free and open on a first-come, first-served basis.

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